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TAGS: PINS PGOV PREL KISL MARR PU SG

SUBJECT: GUINEA-BISSAU: RULE OF LAW RESOLVES TENSE SECURITY THREATS; MFDC STILL PROCURING ARMS AND SEEKING HAVEN

Classified By: DCM Robert P. Jackson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) Two military officers were arrested August 28 for plotting to murder the Armed Forces Chief but were subsequently released for lack of evidence. In a separate incident reflecting the army's inability to control national territory, a Senegalese Movement of the Casamance Democratic Forces (MFDC) faction still operating in Guinea-Bissau moved arms and established bases despite GOGB claims that they were all expelled during the border conflict earlier this year. Guinea-Bissau's armed forces are still stable, but all hopes for reform are pinned on the donor's round table in November. Disappointing results could lead to instability.
END SUMMARY.

PLOTTING TO MURDER THE ARMED FORCES CHIEF?

¶2. (U) Marine Commodore Lamine Sanha and Lt. Col. Almami Alan Camara were arrested and released five days later on allegations of plotting the murder of Armed Forces Chief Major General Batista Tagme Na Waie. A single low ranking soldier accused the two men of plotting against Tagme and the court said there was not enough evidence to hold them. Tagme took the threat seriously since his predecessor, General Verissimo Correia Seabra, was murdered by soldiers in 2004 for delays in salary payment.

¶3. (C) After their release from detention, the two men told the press they were innocent victims of Tagme's plot to move against Muslims in the armed forces and that they would sue him for maligning their character. They claimed Tagme targeted them because they were close to deceased General Ansumane Mane and of the same ethnic group (Mandinka). UNOGBIS, defense attache Col. Ferreira told PolOff that Sanha and Camara were political dissidents and that he and his colleagues have seen no evidence of prejudice against Muslims or Mandinkas in the armed forces. Aphonso Te, advisor to the Prime Minister and former military officer, agrees with Ferreira that the two have no following in the armed forces and do not represent a serious threat to stability or Tagme. Ferriera believes the most significant part of this story is that it played out in court under the rule of law.

MFDC REBELS STILL IN GUINEA-BISSAU

¶4. (U) Despite GOGB claims that its territory is now MFDC-free since the military campaign along the Senegalese border in March/April this year, two recent incidents brought that claim into question. In Puerto Bandim in Bissau on Sept. 7, five men were arrested for transporting arms intended for a newly-arrived group of MFDC rebels. The owner of the canoe who was among those arrested, Maximo Senguibo, told the press the arms were destined for Comandante Vie's men located in Varela, 200 km northwest of Bissau. The materiel, which was not well cared for, included 26 light machine guns, 0 AK-47 assault rifles, 4 RPG rocket launchers, and about 100 grenades.

¶5. (C) The MFDC is not just storing weapons in Guinea-Bissau but is also reportedly building new bases. Director of de-mining NGO Humaid, former U.S. Ambassador John Blacken (protect), told PolOff that an MFDC faction that assisted the Bissau-Guinean military in expelling the Salif Sadio faction from its territory has now set up bases near the border with Senegal. The military has not allowed Blacken's organization access to conduct de-mining surveys in the area about 11 km. west of Sao Domingos, near the location of the deadliest single incident in the spring conflict when a civilian passenger bus hit a mine causing 11 deaths and more injuries. Blacken said the rebel bases are extremely remote, not accessible by any road, and a closely held secret in the military.

COMMENT

¶6. (C) The arrest and subsequent release of Sanha and Camara and arrest of five arms smugglers are positive signs that Guinea-Bissau is relying more on the rule of law despite its

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weak judiciary and lack of prisons. The military remains relatively stable, but observers believe reform efforts have stagnated. There is not yet a final plan for security sector reform for the November 7-8 donor's round table in Geneva, but the British government is making one last effort to assist in formulating a plan by sending experts to Bissau the week of September 25. Tagme and others are pinning their hopes on raising enough in donations to begin reform in earnest and that expectation is probably helping keep the lid on discontent over slow salary payments and poor conditions in the barracks. If the result is disappointing, continued stability will be less certain. END COMMENT.

JACOBS